

CIA HAS NO OBJECTION TO
DECLASSIFICATION AND/OR
RELEASE OF THIS DOCUMENT
45 DECEMBER 1978

RETURN TO CIA
Background Use Only
Do Not Reproduce

OSCAR CONTRERAS

On March 16, 1967, the American Embassy ^{received} a cable from B. J. Ruyte, the American Consul in Tangier, ^{which} ~~stated~~ ^{stated to} that he had met a reporter ^{whom} ~~that~~ ^{allegedly} met Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico City in 1963. [American Embassy Incoming Telegram # A-42 from American Consul, Tangier, 3/16/67, CIA # 560; WX-7241, Entry # 570, p 110, CIA # 737] ~~The reporter had told him that he had advised him not to report the story. (ibid) The reporter asked the American Consul to permit him to report his story because he feared losing his job. (ibid)~~ ^{Subsequently,}

^{The reporter claimed} ~~stating~~ ^{claiming} that he had only a ^{very} ~~few~~ ^{fleeting} contact with Oswald, the reporter claimed to know only about Lee Harvey Oswald's desire to travel to Cuba and the Embassy's unwillingness to grant him a visa. (ibid) When B. J. Ruyte asked the reporter for permission to cable the story to the American Embassy, ^{the reporter} he declined stating that he feared losing his job. (ibid) ~~The reporter explained that~~ ^{the reporter} ~~Subsequent to the assassination, he had told his editor who had advised him not to report the story. (ibid)~~ ^{about his contact with Oswald.} The reporter granted B. J. Ruyte permission to cable the story to the American Embassy when Ruyte promised that it would be handled with the strictest confidence. (ibid) Ruyte wrote that he thought the reporter was genuinely concerned about his job. (ibid)

See (May 11, 1967) ~~is~~ ^{is} A letter from B. J. Ruyte to the State Department, ^{dated} ~~additional~~ ^{additional} details of the reporter's story, ~~was~~ ^{provided}. [Letter to Wesley D. Bowles, Chief of Mexican political affairs, Office of Mexican affairs, Department of State from B. J. Ruyte, American Consul, Tangier, 5/11/67; WX 7241 entry # 597, p 114, CIA # 741] The reporter alleged that he and some fellow students had met Lee Harvey Oswald as they exited the canteen at the Escuela de Filosofia (School of Philosophy) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. (ibid) Oswald told the group that he had gone to the National Autonomous University,

of Mexico looking for pro-Castro students who might help him persuade the Cuban Embassy to grant him a visa. ^{Oswald claimed that he was} Oswald remained from California and was a member of a pro-Castro group in New Orleans. (i.b.d) with the students the rest of that day and evening, as well as the following day. (i.b.d) ^{The reporter described} Oswald as a strange and introverted individual who spoke very little Spanish. (i.b.d)

On ^H, The State Department forwarded a copy of Ruge's letter to the Central Intelligence Agency, ^{on} [The Committee could not determine when the State Dept forwarded the letter to the CIA] On June 14, 1967 CIA Headquarters sent ^{a copy of Ruge's letter to Bureau} informed the Mexico City Station ^{about Ruge's informant}

[Dispatch from the Director to Mexico City, 6/14/67, HMMW 15557; WX-7241 Entry # 616, p. 117, CIA # 744] The CIA Headquarters considered Ruge's report "the first piece of substantive info about Oswald's sojourn in Mexico" since the assassination. (i.b.d) Consequently, ^{HQS called} ~~they~~ ^{that} though they understood the source's reluctance to become involved "the fact remains that this info cannot continue to be withheld or concealed" (i.b.d) Headquarters instructed the Mexico City Station ^{to get the} identity of the source from Ruge. In addition, Headquarters asked the Mexico City Station to bear in mind ^{while interviewing Ruge's} the allegation ^{that} Oswald was a homosexual. (i.b.d) The final sentence of the dispatch; "It is our hope that the facts obtained through these interviews will help to confirm that several of Garrison's allegations about involvement of anti-Castro Cubans, CIA, etc. are false" (i.b.d) explained the Central Intelligence Agency's motives for pursuing the story.

On June 23, 1967, the Mexico City Station called Headquarters that a station officer had gone to Tampico where he had interviewed Ruge's source, Oscar Contreras. [Cable from Mexico City to the Director, Mex 195 6/29/67; WX-7241 entry # 622, p. 118, CIA # 745] The cable reported that Contreras was a reporter for El Sol (a newspaper, The Sun) in Tampico; was circa 30 years old; married with three children; studied law at the National Autonomous University of Mexico ^(UNAM) from 1960 to 1964; belonged to a pro-Castro Cuban group at UNAM; was persecuted by the Mexican police for this affiliation and moved to ~~Mexico~~ ^{Tampico} to escape the persecution.

[Cable from Mexico City to the Director, Mexi 1950, 4/25/67; WX-7241, entry # 625 p.118, CIA # 745]

Contreras told the Mexico City Station official that he and four other individuals ^{(x) others} had met Oswald as they exited a roundtable discussion held at the School of Philosophy at UNAM. ^(Cable 1950, Mexi 1950, 4/25/67, WX-7241, entry # 625, p.118, CIA # 745) Contreras stated that Oswald had made inquiries on the UNAM campus about pro-Cuban groups and had been directed to his group. Contreras reported that the group initially mistrusted Oswald fearing ^(ibid) he was a "CIA provocation," ^(ibid) they allowed Oswald to remain with them that day and night, and part of the following day. (ibid) →

Contreras stated that Oswald never mentioned assassination but kept emphasizing that he had to get to Cuba. In addition Oswald exhibited no homosexual tendencies while he was with the group. (ibid)

→ [When Contreras was asked to identify the other four individuals, ^{who had met Lee Harvey Oswald} he refused to reveal their names because he feared that informing on them might endanger his family.]

~~The Mexico City Station asked Contreras ^{which} if they wanted to investigate the Contreras allegation. (ibid)~~

On July 4, 1967, Headquarters called the Mexico City Station that Contreras' story should be explored to the fullest even though he ^{might} have fabricated it. [Cable from the Director to Mexico City, 7/4/67, DIR 16823, WX-7241, Entry 626, p.119, CIA # 746] Headquarters suggested that the FBI handle the story. (ibid) The following day, July 5, 1967, the Mexico City Station cabled that it offered turning Contreras' ^{case} over to the Mexican authorities and the FBI. [Cable from Mexico City to the Director, 7/5/67, Mexi 1991; WX-7241, Entry 627, p.119, CIA # 746] The same day, the Chief of Station informed the Legat of Contreras

story, but asked him not to take any action without personally consulting the Mexico City Station. [Memo to Legat, 7/8/67 from Chief of Station; WX-7241, entry 628, p. 119, CIA # 746]

On July 10, 1967, [JTB] wrote a memo delineating the results of a [Mexican government] file review and attached a [Mexican] check of Oscar Contreras' file. [Memo from [JTB] re Oscar Contreras, 7/10/67; WX-7241, entry # 634, p. 120, CIA # 747]

According to the memo, ^{a lone} ~~the only~~ Oscar appeared in the UNAM law school records, Oscar Contreras Ladrone, DoB 2/14/39 in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas. The memo also reported that a newspaper article appearing in "Excelsior" listed ^{an} ~~as~~ Oscar Contreras as a signer of a protest for the Bloque Estudiantil Revolucionario which had been formed mid-1961. [The leaders of the group were Victor Manuel Barrios, Carlos Andalez, Hugo Carlos Aranda, Antonio Tenorio Adams, Jose Guzman Guzman, Carlos Ortiz Fajeda, Daniel Molina, Bruno Baluy, Humberto Huente, Oscar Gonzalez, Adam Garcia, Pedro Sandoz Cagide, ^{Pascual} ~~Abelardo~~ Caceres, Jose Eduardo ~~Pineda~~, Juan Saldaña, Martin Reyes Paussadil, Vicente Lullamar, Ruben Fernandez Dorado & Jesus Ochoa] The memo speculated that Contreras probably signed the protest as a front man to protect the real leaders of the group. (i.b.d.)

The Mexico City ^{Station} ~~called~~ ^{designated} the information to HQS the following day, June 11/67. [Dispatch from Mexico City to Director, #MMA 32497, 7/11/67; WX-7241, entry # 635, p. 121, CIA # 748]

~~[There is no further information in the OSWald P file concerning Contreras. The CIA never opened a 201 file on him.]~~

~~It is apparent from the file review that the Central Intelligence Agency was originally ^{extremely} interested in the Contreras allegation because it felt that Contreras might be helpful in giving New Orleans District Attorney John E. ^{Warrick} ~~Warrick~~ at the time was conducting an investigation of the assassination of ~~about involvement of anti-Castro Cubans and CIA ~~files~~~~ ^{allegations} ~~files~~ ^{when,}~~

E. Cubana Airlines

of the Senate Select Committee on Governmental Operations

In Book II of the final report on [the performance of the intelligence agencies in the investigation of the John F. Kennedy Assassination] the CIA is criticized for its apparent failure to fully pursue leads surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy and then to fully report to the Warren Commission the results of the investigation they did undertake.

One such lead discussed was a reported five-hour delay (6:00 P.M. EST to 11:00 P.M. EST) of a Cubana flight from Mexico City to Havana the evening of President Kennedy's assassination, November 22, 1963. [The Investigation of the Assassination of ^{President} John F. Kennedy: Performance of the Intelligence Agencies, Book II, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, 4/23/76, p. 30, Senate Report No. 94-755] The most intriguing aspect of the SSC account involved the alleged delay of a Cubana flight to await the arrival at 10:30 P.M. EST of a private twin-engine aircraft. [ibid p. 60] The aircraft deposited an unidentified passenger who boarded the Cubana aircraft without customs clearance and traveled to Havana in the pilot's cabin. [ibid p. 60]

The House Select Committee on Assassinations examined the documents connected to that lead to determine whether the facts which were known by the CIA about the "alleged" ^{flight} delay warranted further investigation and what investigation was undertaken; b) whether any of that information was reported to the Warren Commission; and (c) whether the known facts suggested any involvement in the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

A chronology of the activity of the CIA on this lead analyzes the information which in the possession of the agency.

To be done at CIA

The source of that lead was an [Italian diplomat, Vilnius Vilnius] who allegedly was on the same flight. []

Analysed

In the ~~OSA~~ 1977 Inspector General report, the CIA attempted to refute several "inaccuracies" in the Senate Select Committee report regarding the "alleged" Cubana Airlines flight. That was apparently the only follow-up by the Agency on the lead after the Senate report appeared.

The Inspector General's report corrected the statement in the Senate report that the "Central Intelligence Agency had no information indicating that a following investigation was conducted to determine the identity of the passenger and had no further information on the passenger, and no explanation for why a following investigation was not conducted" [The Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: Performance of the Intelligence Agencies, Book II, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, 4/23/76, p 30 Senate Report No 94-755] The Inspector General Report explained that the Mexican authorities were asked about the reported flight delay, although there was no recorded response. [1977 CIA I G Report, TAB B, p 11] In addition, the Inspector General Report stated that the Central Intelligence Agency conducted regular surveillance of Cubana flights, filing cable reports to Headquarters (ibid p 11) There was one [circled] 24 CIA surveillance team [LIFIRE] that observed arrivals and departures of Cubana flights, reporting any unusual ^{responses} [and providing copies of flight manifests] (ibid p 11) [The Mexican government had its own surveillance team] 24 [LITEMP] at the airport which provided the CIA with photographs of passengers and copies of passenger lists of individuals travelling to Cuba. (ibid p 11) In addition, [telephone tap operations (LITEMP)] against the Cuban Embassy provided transcripts of conversations ^{between} before the Cuban Airlines office and the Mexican Airport Control Office. (ibid p 11)

The [LITEMP] Transcripts

The [LIENVOY] transcripts record a series of discussions ^{concerning} the status of the November 22, 1963 ^{delayed} Cubana flight-- when it arrived and when it departed. The transcripts show that the flight arrived at the airport at 1620 hours. (All times used will be Mexico City time to avoid confusion) Mexico City time. (HSCA Staff Review of November 22, 1963 [LIENVOY] transcripts) Prior to the arrival of the aircraft, one person stated that the aircraft was due at 1630 hours and "it will go" at 1730, suggesting a quick turnaround that would have reduced unloading and loading time, as well as servicing ^{of aircraft} to a relatively short period. (ibid) However, the ^{key} report on the departure of the aircraft was a statement at 2040 hours that the aircraft had departed for Cuba five minutes earlier, i.e., 2035 hours. (ibid)

Based on the above, [LIENVOY] ^{which} was the only record that existed in the CIA files on the arrival and departure times of the Cubana flight, [Neither the fire nor (the Mexican Surveillance team) negated the arrival or departure flights of the Nov. 22, 1963 Cubana Airlines flight to Cuba] the D.C. concluded that there were ^{what} major differences between ^{about the} the alleged delayed Cubana flight and the known facts. The Cubana flight was on the ground in Mexico City for a total of four hours and about ten minutes. ^(ibid p. 12) It was not delayed five hours as reported in Book II. [The investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Performance of the Intelligence Agencies, Book II, Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, 4/23/76, p. 30 Senate Intelligence Report No. 94-785] The Cubana flight departed at 2035 hours Mexico City time, 55 minutes ahead of the alleged arrival at 2130 of a private flight with a secret passenger. (ibid p. 30) The 2035 departure differed with the Senate Intelligence Committee Report that the Cubana flight departed at 2200 hours (ibid p. 31)

In addition, the IC staff concluded that in view of the surveillance coverage of the Mexican August ²⁴ [by both the CIA + Mexican government, it was doubtful that the alleged activity involving the possible two hijacked aircraft and passengers would have gone unnoticed or unreported had it occurred. (b)(7)

Presumably, the discrepancies pointed out by the Inspector General are meant to explain the fact that the CIA did not take more aggressive investigative steps to ascertain whether there might have been some connection between the delayed flight and the assassination of John F. Kennedy. In that regard, the 1977 Inspector General report explains that the Agency had carried the lead as far as it was able by

surveillance file of the [LIFE OF LEAVOY] hunting [the Mexicans]
all [LIFE OF LEAVOY] plant and strange occurrences [the Mexicans]
[surveillance team] E. C. 1977 & Point, P. 82 [the Mexicans]

of access to further information about the allegedly delayed flight +
 unidentified passenger may well be the case, that fact does not
 explain either the failure of the CIA to take more seriously the
 suspicions of the sources, and most importantly, to report whatever
 information it had to the Warren Commission. The attempts of the
 Inspector General ^{attempts.} to downgrade the value of the information provided
 on the unidentified passenger ^{allegedly Cuban subject, def. 11, 12} ~~do~~ not diminish the apparent negligence of
 the agency in seriously pursuing the information as it was received. The
 CIA is not to be faulted for the strength of its intelligence gathering,
 but rather for the judgement which kept that intelligence from the
 Warren Commission ^{the WC.} [which was mandated to pass on the strength of
 exactly that kind of information]

Despite what is now known about the alleged delay of the China Airlines flight and the unidentified passenger, the Warren Commission may have wanted to ^{alleviate} lay off suspicions which would remain, and patting itself that these circumstances did not indicate foreign involvement in the assassination. The CIA contributed to those suspicions by not airing the matter and explaining

circumstances which could shed light on otherwise sinister appearing events.

The Committee has documented instances where the CIA decided to forego passing information to the Warren Commission out of a desire to not lay bare extremely sensitive sources and methods of intelligence. The [CICEROY + KIFIRE] operation is certainly full within that category.